Assessment of Local Well-being: Executive Summary (Not yet endorsed)

Conwy & Denbighshire Public Service Board
2021

Introduction

We have been working with partners across Conwy, Denbighshire and regionally, since January 2021, to review our existing well-being assessment (published online here). This executive summary and the seven well-being goal summaries will replace the information currently online and will shortly be published for consultation.

We have around 60 detailed topics ranging from transport, obesity, key economic sectors, biodiversity, equality, Welsh language, domestic violence and so on. We also have locality profiles for each of our member area group areas. Each topic provides detailed analysis about: the situation now; how the current situation compares with the past; what the future looks like; what people have said about the topic, and key questions and areas needing further research.

We have given equal weight to what people have told us, and have chosen to highlight this information throughout the assessment.

This has been a significant piece of research. There is a huge amount of detail and so we have chosen to summarise the 60 or so topics into seven well-being goal summaries. However, we are conscious that there is a huge amount of complexity and sometimes tension between issues or across goals, and for this reason we have provided this executive summary, which identifies 14 issues/opportunities. We hope this executive summary will support you in moving from a space with a vast amount of knowledge to a place where you can see the connections, the tensions, and the opportunities.

However, at this point in time, the UK has not fully entered a Covid-19 recovery phase and the consequences of Brexit are being worked through. It is important to acknowledge that some indicators and research show disruptions, due to Covid-19 especially, which makes planning at a time of uncertainty particularly challenging. Furthermore, our previous assessment of well-being highlighted a range of qualitative and quantitative gaps at a local level, particularly gaps about people with protected characteristics. Those gaps are still present, however, this well-being assessment uses national data and research to draw together some conclusions about how inequality manifests itself in Conwy County Borough and Denbighshire, and specifically how inequality of well-being is likely to persist.[1] We will review our analyses to ensure they reflect current and future trends as and when new or more reliable information becomes available.

As public organisations dealing with financial, staff capacity and environmental challenges, it is more vital than ever that we focus our attention on the most critical areas, and that the actions and decisions we make are supported by data and research analysis that evidences that the impact will be effective and improve outcomes for our communities and for future generations. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of data, raising its profile with public sector managers at all levels who have continuously reviewed data and adjusted plans and decisions accordingly. The regular news bulletins and statistical discussions has also raised public awareness of the importance of data.

We need objectivity and confidence in our plans, and for that, we need knowledge based on tangible, solid evidence. To harness the full potential of data and research, an organisation needs to

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[1] Publication of Census 2021 data, when it is available, will to some extent address some of our data gaps.

be intelligence-led, and to this end, data and research needs to be treated as a strategic organisational asset – like people or money.

Public bodies have statutory responsibilities to produce needs assessments. There are a number of assessments in place for social care and well-being, Public Service Boards, economic, environmental and planning. The assessments vary from a county to regional footprint and may involve duplication/lack a joined up approach in terms of overall strategic analysis. The level of resource, skills and capacity to deliver the assessments varies considerably according to the subject matter and are generally non-recurring grant funded which can significantly limit the ability to attract research specialists. We still face limitations in our research and engagement capacity, at local, sub-regional and regional levels and this presents challenges across a number of areas.

List of issues/opportunities

1. A green economy
2. Communities that are resilient in the face of climate change and other global challenges
3. Protecting biodiversity and natural resources
4. Education, upskilling, decent work and incomes
5. Resilient economic sectors that support culture, nature and heritage
6. Travel and transport that supports wider well-being
7. Reliable digital infrastructure, online safety and sophisticated virtual experiences
8. Aging and aging well
9. Tackling poverty and reducing inequality (the well-being gap)
10. Tackling inequality in health and well-being
11. Safe and attractive communities
12. Healthy housing that is resilient to climate change
13. A sense of place and cultural identity
14. Supporting children and young people to be resilient and able to cope with the future

What is different?

Our previous local assessment of well-being was published in 2017. In line with the requirements of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the assessment took a long term view at trends that would affect well-being in the future. Not surprisingly, many of those trends are still present. However, in certain cases, the experience of, and the global response to, the effects of climate change, Brexit and Covid-19, has resulted in some trends accelerating, improving or exacerbating. Furthermore, this latest iteration of our well-being assessment has provided some new evidence or analyses about certain trends and issues.

In summary:

- The effects of climate change are continuing to be felt and at a global, Wales and local authority level – our responses are unlikely to support the achievement of ambitious targets to decarbonise and support nature's recovery.

- There are growing opportunities to boost our tourism sector, linked to our unique culture and natural landscape, as global travel reduces.
- We can see more clearly a future where people already at risk of poverty and inequality disproportionately feel the negative effects of climate change.
- Brexit, and the extent to which our economies and sectors are able to adapt to new rules around importing and exporting, means it is difficult to confidently predict the most likely future for agriculture or food production for example. We do know that there are plentiful opportunities for sectors to adapt and flourish.
- Covid-19 has accelerated trends around more services being delivered online and more people working from home, which has reduced the need to travel (removing travel barriers for some people). We are not sure how we can balance opportunities posed by online services, which can remove travel barriers for instance and produce cost savings for services, with the challenges around the quality of the service from the user's perspective.
- Covid-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities and the long term effects are difficult to predict at present. For example, the impact of school closures and social distancing on vulnerable children and young people and mental health more generally.
- Housing is found to have a strong association with personal well-being (and the factors/drivers that can improve health and well-being, such as employment).
- Employment (specifically higher unemployment) will be a key concern for the short term at least.
- This time around, we have also provided more analyses of a 'well-being gap' between those living in the most and least deprived areas in both counties. We know that trends are not improving, despite efforts to tackle poverty and inequality. There is also a clearer picture emerging of the challenges faced by disabled people, who are more likely to be at risk of disadvantage and tend to have lower personal well-being.

A green economy

The situation now and future trend

The challenges and opportunities associated with a **low carbon economy** remain enormous and will require focussed efforts from **across industry, agriculture and the public sector**. The challenges and opportunities associated with a green economy remain enormous and will require focussed efforts from across industry, agriculture and the public sector. Economic growth has traditionally, and in some cases continues to be, at odds with the health of our planet and all living things.

> *"[A] green economy [is] one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities"*[2]

This describes a highly connective, and regenerative economy that achieves growth but not at the expense of the well-being of the planet or the communities it is home to. Skills, technology, energy, construction, a circular (reduce, reuse, recycle) economy, enterprise, community well-being are all critical to a green economy

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[2] UNEP (2011), ' Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication' (advance copy available from http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy).

We have very challenging targets for **reducing carbon emissions** and these apply to domestic, commercial and public sector bodies. Even the most ambitious national climate action plans will fall short. We need a **regenerative economy**. We should focus on the core systems that are placing the most pressure on ecosystems (based around **food, energy and transport**). **Sustainable construction techniques, designing out waste and decarbonising housing** will be critical and could create many **upskilling** opportunities.

Changes to the **agricultural and food sector** are expected. For example, sheep production is likely to become less economically viable, due to changes in market access and public funding restrictions. Some researchers argue that land currently used for sheep farming in Wales will most likely be converted into forest.[3] These changes will have consequences for our agriculture, our farming **community**, our environment and potentially for **cultural well-being**, as food related-"events" are increasingly connected to local food production. Opportunities associated with **low carbon farming**, agri-food and tourism, nature friendly farming and so on are extensive.[4]

Adaptation to climate change also brings with it economic opportunities and challenges through the development of **new technology**. The development of renewable energy production and the digital revolution for example. Retaining as much benefit locally to the development and deployment of these new technologies will be key.

Concerted efforts are underway to **decarbonise our transport infrastructure**, but challenges remain for those without access to their own personal car, and transport challenges will persist over the long term. Sustainable development thinking here will be critical to preventing problems from occurring for future road users. The **transport** system has an impact on ecosystems and health.

What people have told us

Throughout our engagement with the public is was clear that they want to see innovative changes to decarbonise houses, transport and other infrastructures to tackle climate change. In particular, people want new planning applications for housing and schools to require renewable environmental infrastructure as mandatory, namely, heat pumps and solar panels. In order to work towards decarbonising our transport infrastructure, people have told us they want to see electric vehicle charging points and car parking spaces throughout the county to encourage people to make the switch to electric.

In addition to this, many wanted to see changes to public transport to ensure it was more environmentally friendly by having electric buses accessible to them.

People have told us they would like to see more 'green' employers attracted to communities. Green employers were identified as those that can further enhance sustainable and resilient low-carbon environmental markets and offer secure long-term job opportunities. Some examples include those that can recycle local resources, green business consultancies and research and development companies for innovative green technologies. In addition to this, people want to see a focus on upskilling and tailoring training to suit this demand.

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[3] Wales Centre for Public Policy (2021). *Briefing on well-being and the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit*.
[4] https://northwaleseab.co.uk/blog/four-businesses-leading-towards-north-wales-first-net-zero-farm

There was also mention of the importance of having access to locally produced foods sources, specifically for rural communities. People wanted more promotion in this area to contribute to the local economy and reduce food miles from a carbon perspective.

National priorities

[Wales' Programme for Government](#) consists of almost 100 specific areas of activity. Among its ten well-being objectives are commitments to: "Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future" and "Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation."

Communities that are resilient in the face of climate change and other global challenges

The situation now and future trend

Wales needs to reduce its energy usage and the behaviour changes required to reduce as well as increasing its use of **renewable and sustainable energy sources**, reducing the current dependence on harmful fossil fuels. Resilient communities are those able to successfully **adapt to change**.

The effects of **climate and ecological change** are disproportionately affecting the world's poorest communities, and here in Conwy and Denbighshire, some of the communities most at risk are also at risk of other factors that negatively affect well-being from sea level rises.

There is still more to do to make sure that there are healthy places for people, protected from **environmental risk** across the areas[5]. Ensuring communities are resilient in the face of extreme weather events, notably **flooding and extreme heat**, are major challenges. People living in those areas described as experiencing concentrated deprivation are also **communities at risk** of flooding, they may also be more likely to experience other challenges to their well-being over the next decade or so (food poverty, poorer health, less likely to benefit from energy improvements). In short, they will be more likely to be affected by climate change than more affluent groups and communities. These climate change associated impacts will increase the number of properties, infrastructure and key services at risk of flooding from all sources. Places not previously at risk could become vulnerable and many currently at risk could be of greater risk. The population at risk of exposure to flooding is expected to increase as a result of changes in land-use, urbanisation and development in low-lying areas.

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[5] Public Health Wales in their recent research on Rising to the Triple Challenge of Brexit, COVID-19 and Climate Change for health, well-being and equity in Wales, found that climate change can have direct and indirect impacts on health in Wales, through impacts such as air pollution on respiratory disease and extreme heat event causing excess heat related deaths and through behaviours for example, diet, nutrition, active travel and alcohol. Also, data in assessing the climate risk resilience of our communities in both areas is not available at this time and action has been limited to date to the creation of community flood plans some of our communities at risk.

The global food system has a significant impact on the environment. Land use is identified by the UN IPBES report (2019) as one of the big drivers of the nature emergency. Climate change is expected to have impacts on all four pillars of **food security** – food availability, access to food, food utilisation and stability of the food supply. This is likely to affect **food poverty**.

Preparing for future pandemics (and future resilience) will be a theme for cross-sector consideration. The scope and nature of future challenges is vast.

While management works are in place or planned, the risk of flooding cannot be wholly eliminated and is a particular concern for parts of the Dee river, areas of Denbigh Town and around Brookhouse Mill, flooding from the rivers Elwy, Clwyd and Clywedog rivers affecting Elwy and Ruthin, and along the coastal parts of Denbighshire.

In Conwy, almost 60% of the County population live in areas at risk from coastal flooding whilst communities in the Conwy Valley have suffered recently from the impact of Storm Ciara.

Conwy Council are currently investing in improvements to coastal defences from Llanfairfechan to Kinmel Bay to reduce the future flood risk. Additionally, rural communities have benefitted from the completion of flood alleviation works at Llanrwst and Mochdre whilst other schemes are planned at Llansannan, Penmaenmawr, Dolwyddelan and Betws Y Coed.

What people have told us

People have told us their concerns about the implications of climate change and have expressed their desire to be more supported and empowered to tackle climate change. Communities and local businesses want to be more involved in protecting and respecting the environment.

There is appreciation for local farming and food businesses, and these are seen as essential for communities to remain resilient. There is enthusiasm to see these sectors grow and employ more people by involving communities, retaining local spend and supporting climate change by utilising local sources.

People want to see a proactive approach to planning and support to prevent localised flooding within villages and towns rather than communities having to take a reactive approach when faced with these issues. There was mention of considerations to emergency planning preparedness on where we should site hospitals, care homes, schools, industry and residential areas in light of flooding risks. They stressed the importance of ensuring we can connect to these important areas and facilities in times of flooding.

National priorities

Wales' Programme for Government includes commitments to: "Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future"; "Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation.", and "Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work. Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do."

Protecting biodiversity and natural resources

The situation now and future trend

The rise in global temperatures is impacting on the world's ecology. This is made worse by the loss of habitat quality and quantity through the use of **unsustainable land management and development** activities such as deforestation and the use of pesticides. The protection of the natural environment is also a key challenge for the **rural economy** because of the role played by farmers and other landowners in environmental management.

We need an economy that **regenerates** ecosystems and replenishes natural resources. Achieving **Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR)** means having healthy, well-functioning and resilient social, economic and eco-systems. We are not meeting SMNR in Wales, so by default we can say they have not been met in Conwy County Borough and Denbighshire.

Conwy and Denbighshire exhibit an **exceptionally rich but vulnerable variety of habitats** ranging from coastal cliffs and beaches to sheltered valleys and open moorland. The nature conservation interest of the area is considerable and contains many important features such as areas of limestone pavement, woodlands, hedgerows, meadows, and pasture, reedbed, heathland, ponds and estuarine habitats.

Nature recovery is key to rebuilding ecological resilience and sustaining the benefits that it provides us. The rebuilding needs to be done at a faster pace and larger scale if we are to reduce the potential impacts of climate and nature emergencies.

What people have told us

People have told us the importance of having access to the local green and blue spaces that are safe and clean as this is felt to be part of our areas identity. They want to see increased environmental action and welcome increased biodiversity, conservation and nature protection within local green spaces, AONBs and communities.

People said that whilst there is great demand for housing, what some called a 'housing crisis', people want to see a cautious approach taken to building on green spaces if there are other alternatives. The motivation behind these comments comes from an environmental perspective as people appreciate the green land and biodiversity this brings.

There were concerns raised around litter problems throughout the county which makes areas look unsanitary and unsafe for communities and wildlife. As well as increasing the amount of bins, specifically those split into general and recycling waste within rural areas, people also wanted to see more education and reminders given to communities to encourage people to be responsible with their waste. People have emphasised concerns around the level of single use plastic and the desire to reduce packaging in shops. Young people within schools have repeatedly told us that they are concerned with the level of single use plastics in schools.

National priorities

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Education, upskilling, decent work and incomes

The situation now and future trend

Skills levels of the working age population in the two counties has been steadily improving in recent years. There is a challenge to secure employment for those out of work and upskill both areas' workforces for high skilled/paid work. **Decarbonisation** will be critical and could create many upskilling opportunities (particularly in relation to construction and decarbonising housing and the energy sector).

At a UK level, the estimated **employment rate** for people aged between 16 and 64 years has generally been increasing since early 2012, largely driven by an increase in the employment rate for women and higher State Pension age.[6] However, it is predicted that the **unemployment rate** will remain above the levels seen in 2019 at least into 2024. More young people working in lower-paid, less secure jobs.

Given our forecast about employment, we can expect to see **higher claimant rates** for the next 5 to 10 years and **unemployment**, when combined with health problems or disability, personal well-being is likely to be negatively affected. Denbighshire has the third highest **youth unemployment** rate of all Welsh Local Authorities (10.1% as at July 2021). Conwy's rate stood at 9.1% in the same period.[7] West Rhyl is the ward most affected and accounts for a 5th of the Denbighshire total.

Overall **household income levels** in Conwy and Denbighshire are lower than the national average and a greater proportion of households in Conwy and Denbighshire are estimated to be in **poverty**. There is evidence of higher than average **in-work poverty**. Likely to continue for next 5 to 10 years at least.

Income levels are a key factor in the **housing** market affecting housing affordability. We have recently seen weakness in the owner-occupier market and increasing reliance on private rented accommodation.

What people have told us

People have concerns for the local economy and they want to ensure there is support for small businesses and the tourism sector to ensure the local economy can thrive and be resilient. Similarly, the need for sufficient education, training and employability support for people of all economic activity levels has been evident throughout our engagement with the public. Although, in particular, people have told us that this kind of support for young people needs to be seen as a priority.

Similarly, the need for sufficient education, training and employability support for people of all economic activity levels has been evident throughout our engagement with the public. Although, in particular, people have told us that this kind of support for young people needs to be seen as a priority. Throughout our engagement with young people and in schools, young people told us that having available work experience opportunities was a key priority for them, and they find them difficult to find at the moment. They envision a future where there is one accessible platform where opportunities are advertised as they often don't know where to look.

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[6] Government Office for Science (2021). *Trend Deck*
[7] Claimant count by age - not seasonally adjusted (June 2021)- ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 16 July 2021]

Due to the seasonal nature of the labour market in some of coastal and tourist towns and villages, people have told us they are concerned about the lack of sustainable employment available to them. It is felt that there is a need to attract different types of private employers into the county to increase jobs and support the local economy. In contrast, people recognise the recruitment issues some sectors are currently facing as they have become increasingly undesirable e.g. social care and hospitality, and they wish to see more support and upskilling to address these problems.

National priorities

[Wales' Programme for Government](#) includes commitments to: "Continue our long-term programme of education reform, and ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise. Protect, re-build and develop our services for vulnerable people."; "Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future"; and "Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation."

Resilient economic sectors that support culture, nature and heritage

The situation now and future trend

Changes in the **national and international economies** have the potential to profoundly impact upon the two local authority areas and their residents. This will be explored more fully after the Welsh Governments Future Trends research becomes available.

Over the medium to long term, we are anticipating that **economic sectors** relying on importing and exporting to the EU - like the agricultural and food sectors, or manufacturing and steel for example – will be most impacted. They will need to adjust to survive. For Conwy and Denbighshire, this could mean **sheep production, tourism** and **steel** (those employed in). The impact of Brexit on the **rural economy** has the potential to be very significant.

We have a large **public sector** and the **social care and health** sectors are particularly hard pressed (and face increasing demand). **Tourism** and **Agriculture** are also strategically important sectors in both counties. Our local **economies** are often intrinsically linked to **cultural expression**, for example farming. Many sectors, across the UK, are currently experiencing recruitment challenges that are impacting upon service delivery and causing supply issues. The effects of these on medium to longer term trends is uncertain at this point in time.

While, overall, performing well, the local **tourism** industry is fragile. **Culture/nature-led regeneration** could pose some serious opportunities for communities in Conwy and Denbighshire. **Culture and creative industries** are likely to be at the heart of regeneration; developing capacity of both counties' cultural, creative, tourism and hospitality sectors. There's a role here for **digital** industries. It is important to note the potential impact of growing tourism on infrastructure, including housing.

Agriculture, tourism and hospitality are key sectors across all parts of both counties.

Indications show that in Conwy, the tourism and hospitality sectors were the hardest hit during Covid-19 and have been struggling to recruit staff since reopening. The care sector (in both counties) is another area which is now struggling to recruit staff and is heading towards a crisis.

What people have told us

Cultural and community events are regarded as helpful in connecting people, harnessing the growing sense of community spirit and brings towns and villages alive. People also told us the importance of utilising, protecting and promoting our cultural sites to increase tourism within the counties. Tourism is seen as a key link to support the local economy to remain resilient to challenges faced by Covid-19 and Brexit. People have emphasised the importance of the Welsh language and ensuring that Welsh lessons are on offer within schools and the communities.

There are many concerns around the local economy and people are passionate about encouraging people to shop local and again. Free parking was a popular suggestion, as well as offering affordable fresh locally grown food. People felt local high street shops and small businesses need more support to help them survive and become more attractive. There was concerns of high turnovers of high-street shops with many being left empty. They told us they wanted to see better maintenance of high-streets including good quality shops on offer.

National priorities

Wales' Programme for Government includes commitments to: "Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future"; "Push towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive."; and "Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation."

Travel and transport that supports wider well-being

The situation now and future trend

In particular **cleaner, greener transport. Road capacity** will continue to be a concern. The impact of lack of **integrated public transport** provision particularly for peripheral and rural communities remains challenging. There are important associations with **tourism** (sustainable transport, EV charging infrastructure and active travel). Promoting **active travel** and safe school transport routes are regarded as important solutions. A higher than UK average private car ownership will remain due to the counties' geographies and integrated public transport issues. Subsequently availability of infrastructure to support the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles will be important.

Moving away from dependency on private vehicles will require a culture change or **modal shift**.

People are particularly concerned about active travel, traffic and road use around St Asaph and Llangollen.

In Conwy the sustainability of local bus routes are a worry to local residents especially in the rural areas. Since the pandemic people are more anxious at using public transport thus will have a knock on affect to seeking/holding down employment.

What people have told us

Concerns about the availability and sustainability of transport have been raised in engagement work with the public and officers within the public agencies in each county. This feedback came particularly from young people and people defining themselves as 'working class'.

Active travel has been high on the agenda for the public as they want to see increased walking paths and cycling routes to neighbouring villages and towns. As well as increased maintenance of these routes, other improvements were mentioned such as increased bike locks/storage, increased benches, water taps, toilets and better signage. Some of these improvements are thought to encourage 'reluctant walkers' and enable people to shop locally and cycle to work, in turn supporting the economy and environment.

People have told us they want to see more EV charging points and parking spaces throughout the county to encourage more people to make the change to electric vehicles. In addition to this, people felt there is a need for more environmentally friendly public transport options.

National priorities

Wales' Programme for Government includes commitments to: "Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation.", and "Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work. Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do".

Reliable digital infrastructure, online safety and sophisticated virtual experiences

The situation now and future trend

There will likely continue to be **geographical 'not-spots'** with improvements in these areas being slow to come to fruition. Conwy is among the top ten local authorities with the lowest coverage by all operators for 4G outdoor geographic coverage across the UK.[8] We might see more **data poverty**. Lack of coverage undermines economic objectives and is unhelpful in relation to tourism. Over the next five to 10 years, those with fewer than 100 mbps could be considered 'left behind'.

Over the longer term, people will look for more **sophisticated online/virtual reality experiences** from across the globe, especially as we all adapt to the consequences of climate change. Authenticity and uniqueness will be critical to making these experiences fun, fulfilling and worthwhile.

Online safety and misinformation (infodemics) will be a concern for communities and services alike.

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[8] OfCom. (2019). *Connected Nations Wales*.
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/186410/connected-nations-2019-wales-report.pdf.
Accessed 26 July 2021.

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Personal data management is likely to continue to be, more sensitive. People will seek credible, reliable and transparent information and immediacy will be highly valued. Public services will seek to find more, new and better ways to offer their services virtually.

Parts of the Dee Valley, the villages to both the west and east of Denbigh town, rural parts of Elwy are particularly at risk of isolation.

As stated Conwy, suffers with low coverage and in some of the smaller villages they have already become isolated.

What people have told us

People have told us of the importance of having access to good broadband, particularly full fibre, due to the shift in learning and working from home throughout the pandemic. Others wanted to ensure that, going forward, it is not only digital methods that are used to reach people as there is still a proportion of people who don't use certain platforms and they may miss out on information.

Parents would like support regarding online safety as children are using the internet from a younger age and a wider variety of activities.

From our engagement with seldom heard groups they told us that digital exclusion exists for communities where language, culture or social disadvantage is a common concern. There are also concerns that some may feel intimidated by attending engagement sessions online due to social or language barriers.

National priorities

Wales' Programme for Government includes many commitments but none explicitly refer to digital infrastructure, online experiences or online safety. Although there is a commitment to "Push towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive".

Aging and aging well

The situation now and future trend

Our population is still **aging**. We might see some changes as a result of Covid-19 but it's too early to say (e.g. younger people, families are attracted to the area, or decide to stay, but this could result in increasing house prices).

An aging population is likely to lead to an increasing number of people experiencing **age-related problems**. **Improved life expectancies** also mean that people with complex needs are living longer than ever before, which is a something to celebrate as a success of improvements in health and social care. We do however, need to make sure that health and social care services are able to support this increase in demand as well as provide support for unpaid carers.

The sustainability of some services is reliant on the ongoing resilience of **unpaid carers**: if people were to need paid care instead of being supported by unpaid care, the impact would be significant for the social care and health sector.

Common across Denbighshire, the rural parts of the county and particularly Prestatyn, have relatively high rates of older people (over 65) meaning that the impact of age related illness is likely to be felt more here than in other areas.

Conwy has an older age structure than Wales and Great Britain, the North. Central and eastern areas of Conwy have a higher percentage of over 65s. The eastern area is of particular concern as a higher number of older people live in social housing and is an indicator they are not as affluent, and research shows will suffer more ill health leading to more resources required for this type of older person.

What people have told us

People have told us they want to see more support for the elderly. Specifically, they feel there should be more activities focused on reducing isolation and intergenerational activities which have been proven to have many positive effects.

People expressed their love and commitment to community groups as they connect communities and people of all ages. People want to see better support for these groups to set up and remain viable by having suitable and affordable facilities.

National priorities

Wales' Programme for Government includes commitments to: "Provide effective, high quality and sustainable healthcare"; "Continue our long-term programme of education reform, and ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise. Protect, re-build and develop our services for vulnerable people."; and "Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future."

Tackling poverty and reducing inequality (the well-being gap)

The situation now and future trend

The **root cause of well-being inequality appears to be poverty**. Specifically, its associated relationship with factors such as very poor health, being disabled, workless, having no or only a basic education, being single, separated, widowed or divorced, renting or being middle aged. People living in the most deprived areas not only have a shorter lifespan, but also spend less of it in good health. Despite overall increases in life expectancy, the gap between the proportion of life expected to be spent in good health in the most and least deprive areas has shown no clear sign of reducing in the last 10 years.

We have areas with high concentrations of **multiple-deprivation** including some parts of Rhyl and Upper Denbigh within Denbighshire; and some parts of Pensarn, Colwyn Bay, Llandudno and Llysfaen within Conwy. Whilst the long term resilience of groups with poorer personal well-being and less favourable outcomes is currently unclear, without intervention, some small communities are likely to continue living with factors associated with '**deep rooted deprivation**'. Rhyl West 1, Rhyl West 2 and Rhyl South West 2 are identified by the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation as areas of 'deep-rooted' deprivation.

Economic deterioration is likely to affect the most vulnerable more profoundly. We are expecting to experience **exacerbated inequalities** (a "**well-being gap**") for the short, medium and long term. These are expected to include: disparity in education, skills and employment outcomes; an older population in poorer health and poorer health and well-being generally. Increasing or worsening well-being is more likely to affect people facing socio-economic disadvantage or for people with protected characteristics.

The following **protected characteristics** are more likely to live in the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in Wales, and, in some cases, are also more likely to report lower levels of personal well-being[9]:

- Females
- Younger people
- Single people
- Disabled people
- LGBTQ+ people
- People with a Muslim faith
- People with a Black Asian and Minority Ethnic background (and particularly people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and mixed or multiple ethic, or Arab backgrounds).

Disabled people are more likely have poorer well-being across a number of factors (more likely to live in rented housing, to experience socio-economic disadvantage, more likely to require public services or personal care, and are more likely to have experience exacerbated isolation or loneliness). The disproportionately negative impact of Covid-19 on disabled people has led to a condemnation of the once-again-prevalent medical model of disability, rather than the relevance and more accepted social model of disability. The disability employment gap has narrowed in recent years, though analysis shows it has decreased more for women than men. There is some anecdotal evidence that home working is making work more accessible for disabled people (trans people also).

We had previously seen improvement across a range of attainment indicators with Conwy and Denbighshire reducing historic gaps in attainment, between themselves and Wales. However, the **educational attainment gap** is predicted to widen. At a macro level, those children and young people worst affected are likely to be from poorer backgrounds; are likely to be male; BAME and children with special educational needs and disabilities have been disproportionately negatively impacted educationally, vulnerable children. This will result in long-term effects on educational progression, labour market performance and well-being.

The association between **adverse childhood experiences** and poor outcomes in adulthood is well-understood, and these outcomes (poorer mental health, lifestyle choices that affect health and well-being) can be drivers for lower than average well-being. The impact of Covid-19 on ACEs is not yet understood but is felt to be of major concern.

Upper Denbigh and Henllan have higher levels of unemployment, lower household incomes and poorer health and education outcomes. All of the wards in the Prestatyn area have larger proportions of their population who are disabled or experience a limiting long-term illness than it the case in Denbighshire, Wales or England.

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[9] ONS, 2017.
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/personalwellbeingandprotectedcharacteristics

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All but one area of Conwy have household income levels below the national average and there is a high unemployment rate in the Colwyn and Abergele areas, which have a high proportion of social housing indicating the areas which coincide with the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

What people have told us

An interactive community voices forum, held in October 2021, to give voice to seldom heard groups, has demonstrated the importance of ensuring that a diverse range of communities are able to have their voices heard at all levels. We have been told that engagement opportunities need to be more inclusive for people who work, live in rural communities, or who may feel intimidated by attending on line session due social or language barriers. Trust and confidence are critical. We also need to work collaboratively to ensure we do not overburden the same communities with numerous requests for the same, or similar information and that we feedback regarding the actions taken on the basis of their engagement.

People are concerned about child poverty, and the extent to which the public sector is working to improve the quality of life for people and children in poverty. Child hunger is a particular concern for people and they want to understand the root causes for hunger. People also want to ensure we ask those living in deprived areas to find out what they feel would improve their lives. Homelessness is seen as a factor in deprivation and so too housing quality. Poor housing has been highlighted by people as having a causal relationship with lower life expectancy.

They identified people with disabilities, including learning difficulties, and older people as people they feel should be supported, in particular to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. They thought that there could be ways of building generational links through younger volunteering to support older people. Some accessibility issues were raised for those with disabilities, in particular in arts, culture and heritage sites and one suggestion was to explore a disability friendly rating for public premises, which would work in a similar way to a food hygiene rating.

National priorities

Wales' Programme for Government includes commitments to: "Provide effective, high quality and sustainable healthcare"; "Continue our long-term programme of education reform, and ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise. Protect, re-build and develop our services for vulnerable people"; "Celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms"; and "Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future".

Tackling inequality in health and well-being

The situation now and future trend

Unfortunately, health and well-being in North Wales are not showing a wholly positive trajectory. The main factors that contribute to poor health and **well-being are deteriorating** rather than improving and **social and health care use is increasing** not decreasing.

Office for National Statistics research has identified **three groups most likely to have the poorest personal well-being**: unemployed or inactive renters with self-reported health problems or a disability; employed renters with self-reported health problems or a disability; and retired homeowners with self-reported health problems or a disability

A key challenge for health and social-care sectors is dealing with the delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It will take some time to 'catch up'. What-is-more, there is evidence to suggest that demand for **mental health** support in particular (including **children and young people's mental health**), has increased further following the social distancing and other restrictions placed on people's lives since March 2020. The experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic have left us with many unanswered questions about the future.

Census data shows Conwy and Denbighshire have high numbers of people providing **unpaid care** with numbers much larger than appear to be known to health and care service providers.[10]

Incidences of **low birth weight**, which are seen in some of the more deprived areas of the two local authority areas are of concern. **Teenage pregnancy**, where we have seen an improving trend remains of concern because of the link with poorer health outcomes for both mother and baby.

We know that a person's **physical environment** plays a key role; with poor health associated with [homelessness](), poor quality accommodation and [fuel poverty](). By the same token poverty, unemployment and personal safety, all affect a person's physical and mental health. Access to **open space** is important.

There is **health inequality** within the area. Of all the WIMD domains, the highest number of areas in Rhyl in the 10% most deprived areas was in the health domain; clearly demonstrating the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and health and well-being.[11] People in persistent poverty are at particular risk of having poor physical and mental health; and children, especially, are at an increased risk of mental health problems, obesity and long standing illness.

- People living in the areas in the most deprived fifth of Conwy County Borough or Denbighshire not only have a shorter lifespan, but also spend less of it in good health compared to those living in the least deprived fifth.
- There is a difference of 12 years of healthy life expectancy for males in Denbighshire's most deprived areas when compared to the least deprived (the widest gap for the whole of Wales), and 6.5 years for women. The gap for men in Conwy is 6.9 years and 5.2 for women.[12]

Despite overall increases in life expectancy, the gap between the **proportion of life expected to be spent in good health** in the most and least deprive areas has shown no clear sign of reducing in the last 10 years

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[10] https://www.northwalescollaborative.wales/carers/

[11] Denbighshire County Council (2020). *Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019: Results for Rhyl.* Un-published report.

[12] Source: Gap in life expectancy at birth between the most and least deprived fifth, 2015 to 2017. Public Health Wales Observatory, using PHM & MYE (ONS), WHS & WIMD 2014 (WG)

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The long term upward trend in the proportion of people who are **overweight or obese** is also associated with a rise in chronic health problems that could impact on healthy life expectancies in the future

The consequences of **Covid-19** in particular, have resulted in significant impacts for people's physical and mental health, and well-being more generally. As a result of Covid-19 we have already seen **exacerbated inequalities** (with people with disabilities or from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups being more likely to die from Covid-19) and these health inequalities are likely to continue for the medium and long term. The prevalence of 'long Covid', the term used to describe continued symptoms of Covid-19, is likely to compound existing inequalities in the same way Covid-19 has.

There are particular concerns about **social isolation and loneliness** of young and older people throughout the two counties.[13] The rural nature of both local authority areas means that both have areas with poor access to services from a travel and transport perspective. We also observe areas and groups of people with poor levels access to digital technology, which may also contribute to social isolation. The intersections between isolation and health will have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whilst there is greater provision in terms of **digital healthcare**, there is already a growing concern and wish for face to face consultations.

The role and influence of misinformation (**fake news**) and its impact on our ability to fulfil our wider public health and civic objectives, is not yet clear.

What people have told us

People are concerned about mental health worsening for both adults and children's. There is awareness of the pressure and delays that the health and social care sectors are facing at the moment, and people would like to see more upskilling to tackle recruitment issues.

The need to support healthy lifestyles was raised as a concern for people locally, particularly in respect of tackling obesity crisis, through increased leisure opportunities, education, partnership working and by building on our active travel network. There is recognition that poverty is a driver of poor health and poor health behaviours and one example that came of the engagement refers to the cost of formal sports activities being a barrier to those on lower incomes. People have stressed the importance of schools and other early experiences in shaping health and healthy behaviours.

Active travel has been high on the agenda for the public as they want to see increased walking paths and cycling routes to neighbouring villages and towns. In addition to this, people want to see existing routes are maintained to be litter free, well-lit and vegetation cleared. Outdoor spaces and activities are also of great importance to the public and they want to ensure these areas are accessible and maintained such as nature trails, outdoor gyms and parks.

Access to affordable and good quality housing featured as a high priority for the public throughout our engagement. People felt there is a lack of housing stock and the price of houses and rental accommodation is becoming unaffordable for many. People want to see more social housing available to those in the communities who needed it.

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[13] The data shows that twice as many younger adults say they're lonely more than older people. Percentage of people who are lonely by age and gender (gov.wales)

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Safe and attractive communities

The situation now and future trend

Compared to other parts of the UK, both local authority areas have **low rates of crime and anti-social behaviour**, although in the case of Denbighshire there are **pockets with higher rates** within parts of Rhyl. For both local authority areas **domestic violence** remains a key challenge in relation to personal safety. **Hate crime, county lines and modern slavery and safeguarding** are also key areas of concern and platforms for continued cross-sector focus. There are known links between crime and poverty, and those who have experienced **adverse childhood experiences** are at risk of exploitation by **organised crime**.

What people have told us

Many have praised their local areas to be relatively crime free, the public have told us they take community safety seriously. They would like to see more street lighting within areas of the community as well as an increased police presence on foot throughout local communities. From our engagement with seldom heard groups, they expressed the importance of building trust and continuity within communities. They told us there is a need to celebrate and raise awareness of the things we have in common as a range of diverse communities. They highlighted the need for collaborative work to the address the reality that hatred is based on misconceptions and ignorance.

National priorities

Wales' Programme for Government includes commitments to: "Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work. Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do."

Healthy, stable and affordable housing that is resilient to climate change

The situation now and future trend

The scale of the challenge for householders is great. Rising gas and electricity prices, inefficient housing stock, existing fuel poverty and particular challenges in rural areas which are not on gas network, leaves some doubt as to the **resilience of householders** - of all tenures – in the future.

Housing (and climate change resilience and adaptation), homelessness and pressures on social housing are areas needing further research. There is a link between housing, homelessness, disability and work, where it is felt the lack of stable housing (and home life) leads to worklessness.

Good quality, affordable housing can directly improve people's well-being. At a UK level, there is an increase in UK households in the **private rented sector**. Because the provision of **social housing** is now concentrated on providing homes for the most vulnerable individuals and families, it can often concentrate these groups in the same area. There is a link between deprived neighbourhoods and reduced life chances, meaning that children who grow up in such areas can lack the resources, reasons, skills and confidence to move on.

There are concerns about the affordability and availability of housing in the Dee Valley.
In Conwy, there is a housing crisis. It has been identified that Conwy is in the top 20 for having second homes in the UK and house prices have risen by three times the national average out pricing affordable homes for local people. This is having a severe effect on employment especially in areas such as Betws y Coed, Llandudno and Conwy.

What people have told us

Housing support for young people was discussed at length by people; some of whom feel that rental accommodation is becoming unaffordable. They want to see improved access to good quality affordable housing, including social housing. Redevelopment of empty properties, including repurposing spaces that are no longer used (e.g. office space, dwellings above shops), in place of building new homes could be an opportunity. This could also mitigate people's concerns that the space between towns and villages is reducing as new housing developments are built, as well as taking a cautious approach to building on green spaces by looking at other alternatives. People also want to ensure any new homes that are built meet the local need. Conwy in particular wish to reduce the number of retirement flats and see an increase in more mixed developments for all ages and backgrounds.

Partly exacerbated due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Conwy and Denbighshire being desirable places to live, there are concerns about the number of second homes in areas, affecting affordability and availability of stock. There is a strong desire from the public to put controls on the use of second homes for existing and new stock e.g. council tax premium, local residency covenants on new build, new laws about who can buy in certain areas. It is felt these types of issues will impact on community cohesion and the level of support and or strain on some local services and infrastructure.

In addition to this, people wanted to see new planning applications for housing and schools should requiring environmental infrastructure as a mandatory requirement to ensure our housing stock is efficient as possible. People also want this kind of support for their existing homes to ensure they meet the same standards.

Homelessness is seen as a factor in deprivation and so too housing quality. Poor housing has been highlighted by people as having a causal relationship with lower life expectancy.

National priorities

Wales' Programme for Government includes commitments to: "Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work. Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do" and "Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation".

A sense of place and cultural identity

The situation now and future trend

Research at the Wales level suggests that use **Welsh** is in long term decline. However, further work is needed to further develop our understanding of the trends locally.

The future trajectory of cultural hubs, particularly in **rural areas**, is not clear. Will village halls, pubs and other rural institutions like churches attract enough participants to keep them economically and socially viable?

What people have told us

People have told us they would like to see more done to sustain, value and protect Welsh language and culture, with accessible and affordable Welsh language classes within the community and in schools. They would also like more cultural and community events e.g. Eisteddfodau, carnivals, pavilion events, food festivals, Christmas markets etc., with better promotion to increase tourism, and make the most from our cultural assets (for example, St Peter's Square in Ruthin).

People value community hubs and would welcome more community catalyst initiatives, whereby people become more involved and engaged within their communities Seldom heard feedback suggests that we should look at using sports, arts, culture and the environment in a way that celebrates the diversity of Wales.

National priorities

[Wales' Programme for Government](#) includes commitments to: "Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work. Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do"; "Push towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive."; and "Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation."

Supporting children and young people to be resilient and able to cope with the future

The situation now and future trend

The key issues above all relate, in some way, to the current or future experience of children and young people. However, it is important to reiterate how these key issues are likely to play out for children and young people now, as they grow older, and the new generations of children and young people to come.

Conwy and Denbighshire are likely to continue to experience **outmigration** of young people away from the area. Net out migration of young adults has a knock-on effect on the whole population structure. As well as being the basis of the working age population that drives our economy, they are also the people who will become parents. Fewer babies being born because of an 'absent' parental

cohort means even fewer young adults in the next generation, which then becomes a compound effect on the age imbalance in the population. If past trends continue, it is predicted that by 2039 those aged 65 and over will make up a third of the local population, whereas those aged under 25 will make up just less than one quarter. Economic and educational opportunities (including affordable higher education), along with affordable accommodation have been identified as key factors in retaining and attracting young people to the area.

There is a strong body of evidence of the importance of the **first 1,000 days** of a child's life; addressing inequalities and intervening early to prevent health problems can help people make the best health choices for themselves now and for their children in the future. The association between **adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)** and poor outcomes in adulthood is well-understood, and these outcomes (poorer mental health, lifestyle choices that affect health and well-being) can be drivers for lower than average well-being. There is also a strong economic case for investing in the early years of life. The rate of economic return on investment is significantly higher in the pre-school stage than at any other stage of the education system.

Children and young people, particularly those experiencing or likely to experience ACEs, may continue to struggle to achieve their full potential. **Poverty and inequality**, particularly in those areas identified as having deep rooted deprivation is likely to affect generations to come. Children and young people with ACEs s are more likely to be victims of **crime** and at risk of exploitation by organised crime.

The full impacts of **Covid-19** are yet to be understood, and particularly in relation to ACEs. For example, the **educational attainment gap** is predicted to widen, at least temporarily (although for how long is uncertain), as a result of school closures and continued disruption to education.

The **mental health** of children and young people, linked to social isolation, is a growing concern. Social media and increasing digitisation poses opportunities and challenges.

Children and young people will need to become increasingly adept at living and dealing with **climate change** and the consequences of rising temperatures. In order to live within environmental limits, profound changes will be needed (focussed on food, energy and transport). Children and young people will be living differently: travelling less but connecting virtually in a more global way, eating differently, shopping less. In order to achieve long term sustainable changes to travel habits – to secure a green economy - the culture change needed to achieve **modal shift** (a shift to active travel for short journeys and public transport for longer journeys), might be best focussed on children and young people.

The future workforce will need to be **skilled** and confident to take up opportunities associated with decarbonisation. Access to **fair and decent work** will be critical, especially for those who will be unable to take advantage of highly skilled opportunities. **Agriculture** will look different to how it does today, in response to halting nature's decline and to adapt to a new food market. Right now though, there is an issue with youth unemployment that is particularly significant in the more deprived areas (and there is an association with homelessness).

Children and young people need to live in **safe and healthy communities**, with good and **healthy and affordable housing** and plenty of access to outside **open space** – environments that protect and enhance health and well-being.

Most engagement feedback expressed concern for children and young people, in particular opportunities for children and young people and their mental health.

In Conwy, family centres have been opened across the county to provide families and children with support and help to overcome many of the issues identified. Hoping that with the help and support from a young age the children as they develop and grow with be able to deal more effectively with life's challenges.

What people have told us

Through our engagement with young people they told us they want more support with finding work experience opportunities and employment opportunities. A lot find it difficult to know where to find information on what jobs or opportunities are available. It is felt an improved link between schools and businesses would help to address any skills shortages and that we should promote career pathways into key employment sectors e.g. hospitality and care.

Young people have also told us of the lack of facilities and activities that are available and affordable to them, particularly during the winter months. They would like to see more investment in youth clubs to make them more attractive with better facilities and increased publicity so young people know what they have to offer. Leisure facilities and public transport are also unaffordable to them with public transport having no concession rates for high school children over 16.

Another reason for the outmigration of young people is the lack of affordable housing and rental accommodation. From our engagement we can see this is an increasing concern for the public as house prices and the cost of rental accommodation increases, and supply becomes scarcer.

People told us they would like to see life skills lessons or workshops in schools on subject such as managing finances, digital skills, career advice, budgeting, mortgages and cooking. Young people would also like to be more involved with decision making and understand more about what local councils do.

Concerns were raised around the mental health of young people and the long waiting lists for support, in particular following the Covid-19 pandemic that has had an impact on many areas of their lives. People are concerned about child poverty, and the extent to which the public sector is working to improve the quality of life for people and children in poverty. Child hunger is a particular concern for people and they want to understand the root causes for hunger. People also want to ensure we ask those living in deprived areas to find out what they feel would improve their lives in an attempt to 'break the cycle' of families being unemployed and dependent on benefits.

National priorities

All ten of [Wales' Programme for Government](#) commitments relate to children and young people in some way:

- Provide effective, high quality and sustainable healthcare.

- Continue our long-term programme of education reform, and ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise. Protect, re-build and develop our services for vulnerable people.
- Celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms.
- Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future.
- Push towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive.
- Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation.
- Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work. Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do.
- Lead Wales in a national civic conversation about our constitutional future, and give our country the strongest possible presence on the world stage.